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Walsh, A orcid.org/0000-0003-1501-8804 (2015) Staging the others: Appearance, visibility and radical border crossing in Athens. In: Zaroulia, M and Hager, P, (eds.) Performances of Capitalism, Crises and Resistance: Inside/Outside Europe. Palgrave Macmillan , pp. 134-149. ISBN 9781137379375

https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137379375_8

Walsh,A, Editor(s) Zaroulia M, Hager P, Staging the others: Appearance, visibility and radical border crossing in Athens, in Performances of Capitalism, Crises and Resistance: Inside/Outside Europe, 2015, Palgrave Macmillan, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: http://www.palgrave.com/la/book/9781137379368

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Staging the Others: Appearance, Visibility and Radical Border Crossing in Athens

<AU>Aylwyn Walsh

This is a moment in the contemporary milieu in which the idea of Greece is in a state of constant flux. Reeling from the implications that economic and social 'crisis'[1] has for the country, people in Greece are also navigating the ways in which mythologies are being wrought in order to explain and justify actions and reactions. These myths paint pictures of the great nation (birthplace of democracy), the contagion that has been unleashed to destroy it (immigrants), punitive forces that have implemented harsh measures to discipline the nation (Troika) and saviours (this is questionable, but for some months far-right Golden Dawn held a growing role in the public imagination as saviours).[2] As a result of such mythologising, Greece no longer seems to be a coherent nation but rather a divided and depleted populace with ever-weakening ties to those who represent them in government. In this light, borders as 'barriers to threats or pollution' gain prominence as they make legible the demarcations of who is legitimate inside and who is not (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xxxi). This characterisation of Greece as a leaky, contingent and unstable vector of meaning suggests the need to consider the ways that nation and identity are called into question by the appearance of Others – or what Ash Amin calls 'strangers' (2012) – in the nation state.

It is extraordinarily difficult to write about such a moment – not least because material conditions are changing day by day. More than that, there is the difficulty of unravelling the residue of affect – or what Sara Ahmed (2004) calls 'stickiness' – that taints my research on Athens. The only justification I will offer is that I am not entirely an insider – I am, as a South African who had been resident in Greece, an insider/outsider, an 'alien'. As such, I am always already both an outsider – reflected by my pale skin, lack of fluency in Greek, and non-European world view – and an insider, by virtue of the same markers of identity that make an outsider. As an English-speaking white South African female, I inhabit that most problematic of categories: hyper-privileged in the country of my birth and, by extension, complicit in racial oppression under Apartheid; and an 'alien' in Europe, despite having ancestral and more recent familial ties.[3] My scholarship is sited on this border between belonging and not belonging. However, although I begin from the disjunction between my ethnic privilege and the juridical exclusions I face, I acknowledge the depth of the

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racist and xenophobic exclusions perpetrated against other Others. Often, these exclusions are experienced in the realm of bureaucracy, but, more likely, they are discursive, social, everyday tensions that read difference before commonality; threat before communication. The problems I address occur when there is an intersection between discursive framings of what can be described as Barbarian Others and the embodied inscriptions of the implications on the skin – in other words, race, ethnic and national categories become manifestations of the inside/outside dichotomy.

This contribution is thus crafted as a partly autoethnographic reflection on the current social performances of Otherness in Greece, with all the subjective, partial and embodied perspectives that entails. Thus, while I draw on artistic performance, I am particularly concerned about using performance methodologies to unpack the dramaturgies, settings, social actors, scripts and directors that relate to the tragicomedies of everyday life in Athens within the timeframe 2009 to 2013. I make use of interviews with organisers of a La Pocha Nostra residency in Athens in 2013 in order to reflect on the intersecting problems raised by radical performance in times of crisis. I consider this alongside the capacity for performance to destabilise belonging and the seemingly fixed dynamic between inside and outside.[4] I propose, following Ramòn Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young's compelling evocation of the body's processual becoming in relation to borderlands, that performance provides repertoires for navigating self/ Other. They argue that 'movement with and toward an/Other, the constitution of collective action and the skin's surface as thoroughly relational, avails subjects with a capacity, perhaps even a necessity, to traverse boundaries en route to becoming' (2011: 3).

In order to approach the difficult topic of Others in Europe, I must specify the origins of how Otherness is understood – and, in the case of Greece, as C. P. Cavafy's 1910 poem 'Waiting for the Barbarians' claims, the Other has tended to be characterised as those outside the city limits, carefully delimited by a solid city wall.[5] While, in contemporary Europe, Others are often conflated with racial and ethnic difference, the formulation of the Barbarian (with its concomitant connection with Other languages) suggests a definition of Other that is both spatially remote and distanced from legitimate presence in the polis. Yet, in the globalised world, bodies, like commodities, are trafficked across borders, rendering urban identities always already polyvalent (Amin 2012). This is where I have found it necessary to consider anew the ways in which Others are produced in Greece in the era of 'crisis' by examining the ways in which strangers' bodies (and the interrelationship with local spaces and identities) draw attention to juridical, spatial and socio-cultural borders. I offer a reworking of Sophie Nield's (2006; 2008) valuable specification of borders and visibility in relation to the 'appearance' of refugee bodies.[6] Her formulation states that the border functions not merely as a geographical or representational space, but that it:

> <EXT>produces a second border between the body and its visibility to the law. This second border lies between the human and the rights pertaining to the condition of being human. It disaggregates that which should be inseparable, and destroys the possibility of appearance. The body of the refugee is there, but it cannot appear. The person is there, but they cannot be seen. They are present before the law, but invisible to it. They have entered the apparatus of disappearance, and vanished in plain sight. Here, but not Here. (2008: 144)
> </>

The argument suggests that there is an extension of the biopolitical mechanisms of the role of international borders in surveillance, documentation, coercion and exclusion that render Others' bodies visible through a declarative process of making a claim for protection (or asylum) from the state (Amin 2012). Yet, in the case of Greece, most immigrants do not in fact appear at borders simply because the physical borders are porous coastlines.[7] In Greece, then, people who intend to claim asylum tend to need to reappear in city centres to lodge papers in order to be considered for asylum. Yet, I feel it is important to assert that appearance or a claim to presence before the law is arbitrary and dispersed precisely because of the tensions raised by Nield; the 'Here, but not Here' formulation demonstrates that there is an agential process of staging and recognition in which the perceiver must agree to constitute the conditions under which appearance becomes visibility. Thus, the borders are relocated to inner-city bureaux for aliens, rather than being sterile borders at ports of entry. The bodies' appearance and constitution of borders thus need to be reconceptualised in light of the chaotic and corrupt spaces that I term 'borderlands'. The border is what Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr consider 'a zone between states where the territorial resolutions of being and the laws that prop them up collapse. It is a zone where the multiplicity and chaos of the universal and the discomfits and possibilities of the body intrude' (2007: x). Theorists writing on borders have repeatedly reflected on the interface between bodies and legal space, with Étienne Balibar suggesting that the borderland becomes the site of repetitive inhabitation that 'becomes, in the end, the place where he [sic] resides' (2002b: 83).

Shahram Khosravi takes the notion forward, suggesting that undesirable persons are 'positioned on the threshold of in and out' (2007: 332), and that borders 'have become invisible borders, situated everywhere and nowhere. Hence the undesirable persons are not expelled by the border, they are forced to be border' (2007: 333). Rivera-Servera and Young suggest that 'the border alters the way that bodies carry and, indeed, perform themselves not only in the moment of encounter but also for years (and even generations) afterwards' (2011: 2). This conceptualisation proposes the need to consider the legacies of performance as well as of border crossing. My assertion is that, rather than migrant bodies rendering the border meaningful by appearing there, on the contrary, any spaces migrant bodies inhabit become constituted as borderlands; which precisely sets the conditions for states to promote diffuse border control in the ways in which citizens are protected from 'floods' of migrant Others. Nield notes that there is also a normative operation of navigating borders in which failure 'to negotiate this mode of appearing, or to inhabit the space of the border properly, causes a sort of spatial disjuncture, a stasis. The refugee becomes a non-person, a border-dweller' (2006: 68).[8] Yet, while Nield's formulation places ethical relationships and spatiality within the question of appearance, it is predicated on a politics of visibility and presence that ought to be radically questioned in light of the situation faced by migrants in Greece. By this, I mean to revisit the assumption that performance provides concepts relating to what 'appears' and is visible as a public spectacle (see Nield 2010: 39). Rather, it is necessary, in this analysis, and indeed in the wider field of performance studies, to expand the conception of the relationships between bodies, space, legitimacy, legibility, voice and audience in a more robust understanding of civic response-ibility (cf. Butler and Athanasiou 2013). In other words, as the struggles for political agency in what has become known as the Arab Spring have shown, what is important is not merely in and of the performative rupture of a protest or movement, but in the notion that bodies claiming public space carve a potential for political representation. It is not so much about being in public, but in the transformation of the sanctioned, legimitised usage of public space into a stage on which bodies must be recognised, and human lives must be counted. I propose these stages as transient 'meanwhile'[9] spaces, in which Other identities and subjectivities are platformed for the public to witness. Embodied pain, suffering and, sometimes, martyrdom are framed as performative precisely because they do something in relation to the public space in which they are constituted. In other words, they begin to construct a commons predicated on wider ideals than the subjective experiences that are staged.

> <EXT>I am thinking, for example, of a series of lip-sewing protests that occurred in Athens between 2009 and 2010, in which Afghan and Iraqi asylum seekers pitched tents in the forecourts of Propylaia and conducted seated, silent, protests. I approached the protest in order to find out more. Several men stared out, wrapped by protective sheets, while some spokespeople gathered signatures from supporters. The protests were staged in order to draw attention to horrors the asylum seekers described in their own countries of origin (sometimes accompanied by graphic images of war-torn towns and cities), as well as pleading their right to be considered for asylum in relation to the harms they faced at home.[10]
> </>

What is at stake in these meanwhile spaces is the wider issue of Europeanness that Amin characterises as ‘hospitality, mutuality, solidarity, care for the commons’ (2012: 133). So long as the lip-sewing protests continued in these spaces, these struggles appeared, and while not necessarily resulting in the desired outcome (of speedier, more transparent recognition of asylum processes), the performance of a space for mutual recognition was forged. In the three years since those protests, immigrant bodies have tended to remain hidden, invisible in public spaces in Athens; this is largely connected to the rise in xenophobic hate crime perpetrated by right-wing factions in collusion with police.[11] Reports document the ‘disappearance’ of migrant bodies from streets and squares at night, both as a result of being injured or forced to leave through ‘clean-up’ operations such as Operation Xenios Zeus (named after the God of Hospitality) and related to the resulting fear of harm and persecution that then drives people to protect themselves by staying out of sight (Marchetos 2013). The problem then becomes to what extent the lack of appearance of strangers/aliens/Others reinforces the problematic of a bounded community based on nationalist ideals that advocate a hierarchy of belonging closely tied to ethnicity. Further, how might an understanding of the performative conceive of the promise of action in the resistant potential of migrant bodies protesting in urban space? Finally, how can we develop a more robust capacity for using performance in the struggle against invisibility, marginalisation and stereotyped repertoires of alien behaviour?

This line of questioning suggests a tension between visibility/invisibility and appearance/disappearance, which is well rehearsed in refugee studies, suggesting that appearance as an alien does not equal visibility in the public sphere. Thus, personhood, agency and the incorporation of human rights into public space or the polis are all in question. Yet mere appearance does not signal recognition nor fair opportunities to contribute to the social. In the lip-sewing protests, for example,

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despite having appeared daily for several months, the visibility of the demands was not evident in the consciousness of the state. Nevertheless, I believe that state recognition does not equate to visibility – but rather that making visible is the terrain of radical political necessity, as pointed out by Taylor and Marciniak (2013 152). Furthermore, the state's capacity in times of crisis to see and respond is reduced. The state cannot or will not see, recognise or witness such acts – voluntary blindness, on the other hand, means that the state is not compelled to act.

By examining the political quagmire of migration in relation to visibility politics, I suggest that it is necessary to reconsider the expansion or diffuseness of borders. Performance provides a means of conceptualising how biopolitical systems of inclusion and exclusion operate at the level of how norms and rules come to dictate everyday access, participation and agency in civic life (See Amin 2012: 24–7). One practice to be considered is Guillermo Gómez-Peña's 'radical border crossing'. Yet most self-aware aesthetic performances of border crossings are not always able to make visible the very real dangers faced by migrants as they navigate the Aegean sea, or the new Frontex fence at the Turkish border at the River Evros. There is thus an ethical distinction to be made between symbolic representations of suffering (for example, the mass 'die-in' protests that gained popularity in Athens in 2009–10)[12] and the bodily risk endured by migrants on their journeys to Europe. This contribution goes some way towards demonstrating how performance can be involved in revealing the complexities, contradictions and tensions in these issues. In simplistic terms, Europe is seen as a promised land to which migrants have flocked – often depicted as a 'contagion', a 'tide' or a 'flood'.[13] This imagery is not limited to Greece, but, indeed, pervades the European imaginary as a cohesive, bounded, civilised (white) union of benevolent nations that broadly accept the cheap benefits of a cosmopolitan outlook – support for freedom of movement of the desirable Others while carefully monitoring, limiting and denying such freedoms to undesirable Others, or Barbarians (Amin 2012).[14]

While debates on immigration never cease to provide political fodder for EU countries, it is less common to hear any acknowledgement of the interplay between globalisation, capitalism, gentrification and the concomitant need for cheap labour, often provided by migrants. Thus, in times of plenty, in which construction occurs, a need for labour is created, requiring the flows of migrant workers to fulfil the contracts that (presumably) local workers are not prepared to fulfil. This is usually because labour conditions are poor, wages low, and safety considerations not always met. When economies shift into shrinking modes, construction is always an industry affected by downturns, and thus migrant workers are rendered unemployed – seen as surplus to the market. The implication, usually perpetuated by the media, is that migrants should 'go home' (as, for example, in the short-lived, council-sponsored 2013 'Go Home' campaign in the UK); and there is often visible resentment that emerges between unemployed migrants and locals with the accusation that 'they' are stealing 'our' jobs. This shifting rhetoric dictates what bodies become expendable when an economic 'crisis' demands that the value of labour is in question. Unfortunately, this problem is rarely rendered political through the wider questioning of the values of expansion, growth and development at all costs in the first instance.

Athens' 2004 Olympic Games are a case in point for the concomitant superficial and rapid expansion of urban development at the cost of social cohesion. Immigrant communities once seen as essential to the construction of the urban centre had, in light of the economic 'crisis', become superfluous, a nuisance and, at worst, a threat to the image of a successful neoliberal city. Rather than being welcomed as builders of the dream city, unemployed migrant workers were rendered 'illegal' when they no longer made valid social services contributions. Thus, people were criminalised for losing their jobs.[15]

There are countless examples that bear witness to the growing precarity faced by migrants in Greece, not least due to the brutal impunity with which police forces collude with violence against migrants. A recent New Statesman report by Spyros Marchetos (2013) describes a law that criminalises those who 'assist' illegal immigrants. This law is not only aimed at those who traffic people across borders, but has been widely used to prosecute people helping migrants to access food and medical treatment – those ties of solidarity and hospitality that are considered foundational to post-Enlightenment Europe. In short, the rule of law thus generates a border between 'us' and 'them' by making acts of hospitality and belonging synonymous with human trafficking. The threat of the law is that it supposes the person's legal status to be of primary importance; and, in practice, this status is conflated with racial and ethnic markers of difference. The threat of incarceration for 'assisting' migrants undoubtedly weakens the ties between host communities and migrants. Ultimately, it calls into question the qualities of being human that are upheld by the UNHCR, suggesting that the accountability structures of the EU and other international watchdogs (such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) are perceived as bureaucratic exercises that have no impact on the practices of border politics, especially in relation to migrant detention.[16] Ultimately, the drama of immigration is played out with excessive stakes for the migrants, and as a farce for officials – in which bodies ‘disappear’, files and claims are ‘lost’, and bodily harm is rendered a show when there is no legal recourse taken against perpetrators.

Having considered several instances in which borderlands are constituted in public spaces in the city, the next section marks a shift in the chapter towards framing a particular performance practice within the Greek context. I turn from the territories of performance of everyday life (the ways in which migrant bodies appear and constitute border meanwhile spaces) to the ways that aesthetic performance can operate as a radical, political intervention in the animation of dialogue about inside and outside, Self and Other. To do so, I draw on the work of Gómez-Peña and his performance collective La Pocha Nostra, which has crafted a method of radical border crossing in and through performance (see Gómez-Peña 2000; 2005; 2008; La Pocha Nostra 2013). The framework this methodology provides is then used to consider the La Pocha Nostra residency held in Athens in summer 2013, based on interviews conducted with one of the organisers, Fotini Kalle. The implications of their performance processes are then remodelled in light of my interest in the contingent and precarious conditions in Greece in the (emergent) conditions of ‘crisis’.

<A>Radical border-crossing: La Pocha Nostra in Athens

<EXT>
To the masterminds of paranoid nationalism
I say, we say: ‘We,’ the Other people
We, the migrants, exiles, nomads, and wetbacks
in permanent process of voluntary deportation
We, the transient orphans of dying nation-states
la otra *America; l’autre Europe y anexas*
We, the citizens of the outer limits and crevasses
of ‘Western civilization’
We, who have no government;
no flag or national anthem
We, fingerprinted, imprisoned, under surveillance
[…]
We demand your total TOTAL withdrawal
from our minds and bodies ipso-facto
We demand the total restructuring
of the world economic system in the name of democracy and freedom
[…]
I speak, we speak, therefore we continue to be ... together
even if only in the realm of the poetical
even if only for the duration of this unusual mass.

> 'A Declaration of Poetic Disobedience from the New Border' (2004) (quoted in Gómez-Peña 2005: 227–34).

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Gómez-Peña is an influential Mexican-American performance artist based in San Francisco, whose career spans over thirty years. With his transnational collective La Pocha Nostra, he has developed a methodology that straddles performance, activism and pedagogy. The collective has become renowned for its intensive residencies at which international artists develop paradigms of being together through and across difference. Indeed, La Pocha Nostra insists that, through the boundary-breaking potential of performance, we should render the very notion of borders (between nations, ethnicities, cultures, sexual identities and genres) obsolete. Thus, I integrate this methodology by deliberately applying the thinking of Chicano/cyborg performance artists in America to rethink the problems and possibilities of the border in Europe in the milieu of 'crisis'.

La Pocha Nostra's methodology draws on hybrid influences from performance art, live art, ritual, activism, community organisation (such as the Zapatista movement) and radical pedagogies. The resultant work is always the product of intensive collective creative processes that normally rely on a residential model. Its aesthetic is extreme, obscene and hyper-visual, often relying on excess, subverted or distorted stereotypes, and the conflation of styles and genres. The collective's manifesto claims: 'it is our desire to cross and erase dangerous borders between art and politics, practice and theory, artist and spectator. We strive to eradicate myths of purity and dissolve borders surrounding culture, ethnicity, gender, language, and métier' (Gómez-Peña 2005: 77). Gómez-Peña explains that much of the collective's work seeks to consciously explore the 'spectacular' presence of Other-as-freak (2005: 62) by decorating and enhancing their bodies (with what they call 'hyperethnic' motifs). According to him, the aim is to exaggerate their 'extreme identities' as already 'distorted' by their mediatisation (2005: 62).

> <EXT>The composite identities of our 'ethnocyborg' personae are manufactured with the following formula in mind: One-quarter stereotype, one-quarter audience projection, one-quarter esthetic artifact, and one-quarter unpredictable personal/social monster. These 'artificial savages' are cultural projections of First World desire/fear of its surrounding subcultures and the so-called 'Third World Other.' The live performance becomes the process via which we reveal the morphology of intercultural fetishes and the mechanisms propelling the behavior of both our 'savages' and our audiences. (2005: 81)
>
> </>

Since La Pocha Nostra's approach is intentionally political, it seemed welcome that they had chosen to relocate their annual summer intensive residency programme to

Athens in 2013,[17] instead of holding it in its usual location in Oaxaca, Mexico. I felt that this was a conscious choice to explore radical performance pedagogy in the moment of radical political need. This reveals my idealistic position that performance interventions can and do provide challenges and provocations to the social realm. Yet my discussion with organiser and participant Fotini Kalle revealed some of the tensions underlying the process. Our conversation revolved around the problem of performance in time of 'crisis'; the place of performance in a context that is highly cultural but more accustomed to traditional drama or theatre as well as the problem of building communities in a space and time in which community is contested, identities are challenged, and national sovereignty is under question. In their manifesto, La Pocha Nostra explains that they:

> <EXT>[Collaborate] across national borders, race, gender, and generations as an act of citizen diplomacy and as a means to create 'ephemeral communities' of like-minded rebels. The basic premise of these collaborations is founded on the ideal 'If we learn to cross borders on stage, we may learn how to do so in larger social spheres'. (Gómez-Peña 2005: 77–8)
> </>

In our interview, Kalle discussed the ways in which systemic borders operated to maintain borders between art worlds. Indeed, much of the modern Greek identity is bolstered by the ancient legacy from drama (Calotychos 2003; Zaroulia 2014).

The process culminated in a promenade in which performers presented tableaux vivants (or body installations) using architectural spaces, with Gómez-Peña using a megaphone to annotate the images with words. Altar of the Dead Immigrant was created by smaller groups in the exterior of the building at the Athens School of Fine Art. The approach seems to rely on excess, with provocative use of adornment, repurposed props and costumes, but the workshop process tends towards a much more detailed, multi-layered questioning of the constructions of identities in the images created either as individuals or in the group. In the workshop 'jam' sessions, there was a lot of discussion about how to develop and craft images through an 'inside-out' approach, according to Kalle. Yet, there was one element of the La Pocha Nostra methodology that was not fully negotiated in Athens, which is the exploration of city spaces in the personae developed in workshops. It was felt that the extreme xenophobia and the rise in conservative protections of public spaces (both from 'the public' and the police) would make the venturing of extreme ethno-rebel artists into city spaces too dangerous.[18] This, along with the threat of xenophobic violence against several members of the troupe, in light of Golden Dawn's stronghold on the public imagination at the time, made performance in public space seem a border crossing too far. Once again, then, the radical performance intervention in public space was not apparent – that is, it did not appear to make the forceful claim to space, rights and visibility that it could have done (and has done in other cultural contexts).

Performance makers are used to defending the legitimacy of their art to funders, institutions and citizens who need to understand the meanings and intentions behind the work before it can be supported. Kalle highlighted the difficulty in getting any financial or in-kind support for hosting the residency. Yet, we might acknowledge the difficulties of justifying support for the arts in the face of the widespread struggle for survival of the general populace. Despite developing work that consciously draws attention to the place of performance to challenge how art or activist interventions become included or excluded, the residency in Athens raised some further problems of the place of performance in times of 'crisis'. From our discussion, it seems that there was a hierarchy of urgency and preoccupation that emerged – with local artists entirely possessed with the problems of 'crisis' (which, by now, may seem like an empty signifier), from political frustrations, to the lack of hope and financial uncertainties. Instead of being able to use the residency as a means of creatively opening up spaces for discussion and transformation, this preoccupation became a border between 'us' (those experiencing the 'crisis' in an embodied way) and 'them' (artists who were merely visiting). The real and imagined oppressions of 'crisis' meant that the curiosity, and the ability to transgress national borders and create wider trans-national communities of 'rebel artists' were hindered. I do not wish impose meanings on the introspection but to raise it as an articulation of the kinds of terrains of value occupied even within the radical performance-making context. Perhaps La Pocha Nostra would embrace being seen as the Barbarian in this context.

La Pocha Nostra often refers to the non-existence of the word performance in Spanish, and it is the same in Greek, so that it is a linguistic import, as well as a cultural one. What is key in La Pocha Nostra's method is its development of the agency of individuals to construct their own extreme hyper-ethnic (re)presentations, usually incorporating multiple kitsch objects in outrageous tableaux that work with contradictions. Yet, in the Athens residency, one of the most compelling images was strikingly simple and without paraphernalia. In this image, a nude black body (devised by US performer Khi Armand) on a slab of marble is draped with a Greek flag and is wearing a wreath of leaves on his head. These marble slabs immediately evoke a graveyard, and the formal, prone position of the body resembles a corpse on a mortuary slab. The addition of the flag is reminiscent of a military rite of passage, in

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which 'fallen soldiers' are draped with the flags of their nations in order to commemorate their bravery in dying for their countries. There is an obvious irony in this image, since the Greek flag has, in recent years, become synonymous with a growing, violent and xenophobic right wing. Their deployment of identifications relating to nation is as much about excluding Others as it is about glorifying the Self. The dead or dying body in the image draws attention to the interplay between body and nation. La Pocha Nostra's explicit interest in challenging nationhood and racist identifications is captured in this tableau.

<INSERT Image 7.1>

Despite being a practitioner interested in participating in the La Pocha Nostra residency in Athens, I was unable to attend, because my own passport was held by the (then) UK Border Agency for processing a claim for leave to remain. I was (in a way) sans-papiers for longer than six months, and, with a different degree of pressure from those considered 'illegal', I experienced the frustration and anxiety of being 'stuck'. This was in contrast to several years previously, when I was waiting for papers to be ratified to stay in Greece.

> <EXT>*Last time I arrived at the alien's bureau I got waved to the front of* the queue bec*ause I put on lipstick that day. (I didn't know at the time that* people suffered in that queue for days at a time – sometimes weeks.) I did know that I benefited from my whiteness one more time. That officials spoke to me in English without shouting or tutting in frustration. That I only had to visit seven different agencies, translate three different papers and purchase two types of insurance to get rubber-stamped. That I was lucky because I had an insider with me to translate.
> </>

My experience of being judged as an insider with a legitimate claim to Europeanness was based on my skin colour. I appeared to fulfil the preconceptions of what the State approved, and as such was not subject to the humiliating and often dangerous limbo faced by fellow aliens. My own implicit position as holder of privilege serves also to reinforce the institutionalised xenophobia and racism that are causing immigrants to remain invisible. My concomitant insider-alien-outsider status leads me towards a radical performance in opposition to insidious everyday practices. Along the same lines, reflecting on the uncertainty and ambiguity relating to the quashing of civil liberties since 9/11, Gómez-Peña tells an interviewer that:

> <EXT>[the] performance stage has become, by default, a demilitarized zone, a sanctuary for critical culture and progressive behavior, a space where people

> can really talk about important issues, the issues that aren't being raised in the media, in the workplace, or at home. (2005: 280)

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For Cavafy, the Barbarians were a 'sort of solution' for the citizens. The pregnant waiting of the citizens draws attention to a time of political stagnation and disillusionment that is nevertheless filled with the possibility that the Barbarians' presence will bring solutions. To return to the imagery of the meanwhile spaces, this waiting for destruction or salvation at the hands of Others can be identified beyond the political sphere, in which the Troika performs the ostensible saviour/destroyer role, depending on the perspective taken.

This repetition of the Barbarian is worth considering in relation to the La Pocha Nostra residency – and is perhaps a fitting analogy for the company's intention to cross borders of all kinds, while claiming positions of marginality. It is unlikely that the company would think of itself as a 'solution', but, nevertheless, the reception given to radical border crossing in the context of the residency in Athens reflects the stickiness (Ahmed 2004) of the besieged nation, constantly waiting.

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In closing, I return to the characterisation by Rivera-Servera and Young (2011), who propose that border crossing is processual, painful, and relates always to movement. This suggests an ongoing practice that both draws attention to the borderlands and contests them. This is done by staging these arguments in public space, by exposing the contestation within the notion of creative communities, and by re-examining the assumptions made in and through performance practices that continue to serve the notion of the border as holding meaning. This suggests an urgent project – both theoretical and in praxis – that explores how performance reproduces the logic of the border, and to consider what performance allows us to see after all. Until performance residencies designed to explicitly reframe borders can occur without an inside/outside dynamic that positions people as locals/strangers, then borders – discursive, embodied and national – will continue to exert their force.

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[1] Throughout this chapter, I use quotes around the word 'crisis' in order to draw attention to its use as an empty signifier, and the fact that it is used generically and abundantly and is thus problematic.

[2] It is necessary to mention that I do not believe these to be accurate characterisations of the status quo, but rather I am ironically deploying these narrow populist views by means of introducing the terrain of the argument. Other scholarship that deals with the foundations of modern Greek identities include Calotychos (2003) and Christopoulou (2014). The particularity of how culture and performance replicate the modelling of nationhood is discussed in Zaroulia (2014) and Zaroulia and Hager (2014).

(2015) 'Staging the Others: Appearance, Visibility and Radical Border-Crossing in Athens' in *Performances of Crisis, Capitalism and Resistance*. Edited by Marilena Zaroulia and Philip Hager. Palgrave 2015. pp. 134-150.

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[3] I am drawing on the work of Janet Woolf, whose account of a feminist approach to categories of belonging acknowledges the degree of choice that some aliens hold, and thus makes explicit the wide spectrum of marginality that can be experienced as a (resident) alien (see Woolf 1995: 210). Katarzyna Marciniak has developed a further theorisation of the alien as a cultural construct in film studies (2006).

[4] This methodology requires signals between the theoretical arguments, the reflexive autoethnographic accounts and analysis.

[5] Cavafy's poem begins with the citizens in a perilous state waiting for the invasion of the Barbarians. Its last stanza demonstrates the discursive constructedness of the Other: 'Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion? / (How serious people's faces have become.) / Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly, / everyone going home so lost in thought? // Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come. / And some who have just returned from the border say / there are no barbarians any longer' (Cavafy translated by Keeley and Sherrard 1984: 19).

[6] Here, too, I acknowledge the difficulties of using terminologies that relate to the legal status of persons according to which paperwork they have been accorded. In Greece, many migrants who would otherwise have lodged papers for asylum are rendered 'illegal' because they are not able to 'present themselves' (or appear) to lodge claims in time. The corrupt and un-transparent processes have been widely critiqued, yet very little has changed (Human Rights Watch 2012; 2013). Thus, in this chapter, I shift between the terminology of Others and aliens as well as resorting to the juridical terms where authors make use of these terms. In part, I suggest that the distinctions – in the example of Greece – are arbitrarily determined, and that they serve a particular ideological/discursive construction.

[7] I feel it is important to recognise that the 'problem' of coastline borders is not unique to Greece, as the multiple deaths of migrants near Lampedusa in October 2013 demonstrate so viscerally. There is, however, a historical difference in the ways in which different Mediterranean nations have policed their coastlines, with human rights organisations claiming Italy in particular as negligent in its recognition of the human rights of the migrants. This is particularly acute when migrants do not appear on land but remain in boats. The phenomenon of 'pushing' back or refusing access, or even interception of boats with trafficked people, draws attention to the diffuse borders of nations. See Pugliese (2009) and Zaroulia's chapter in this volume.

[8] Drawing on Nield's work, Amoore and Hall consider that the performativity of the border:

> <EXT>also lies in the creation of a particular kind of space: one that relies on ritualized sequences and calculations to produce the appearance of securability, but which retains a liminal potential, and which is theatrical, not in a playful illusory sense, nor in the sense of a scripted, rehearsed pretence, but as a space configured as theatre in which appearance, and identity, is always in question. This, then, is the paradox in drawing out the theatre and ritual inherent in the border, which reveals something of its inconsistencies. (2010: 304)</>

[9] I would like to acknowledge Myrto Tsilimpounidi for this term – referring to land that has been allocated for gentrification but which remains undeveloped. There are usually hoardings placed around such areas, demarcating them as surveilled property. The land serves no purpose when in 'meanwhile' status, except to announce the promise of coming development, through mechanisms of fences, CCTV cameras and threats of prosecution against trespassers. Meanwhile spaces are thus exemplary of the performative signalling of the border.

[10] This section, and a subsequent one, have been generated by writing according to La Pocha Nostra methodologies, in which the personal, reflexive, often contradictory embodied narrative is put into dialogue with critical materials without hierarchies. This braiding of the subjective will become apparent as a rationale later in the chapter.

[11] See Human Rights Watch (2012; 2013).

[12] Some examples are discussed by Marios Chatziprokopiou (2014), whose anthropological/performance research focuses on lament.

[13] This notion is explored in Hein de Haas (2008). See also Levy (2010) in relation to migration and securitisation.

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[14] As a further example from the UK, there was growing xenophobia reported in relation to the accession to the EU of Romania and Bulgaria, largely stirred up by populist politicians and tabloid media (see Quinn 2013).

[15] Levy (2010) writes of a European context of migration–development nexus versus an asylum–migration nexus. See Golash-Boza (2010) for a US perspective.

[16] Levy points out the discrepancy between member states in specific cases, such as Afghani asylum seekers. Italy recognised 98 per cent of Afghan asylum seekers; the UK recognised 42 per cent; while Greece denied all cases (2010: 106–7).

[17] The two-week residency was hosted at the Athens School of Fine Art (with a trip to Delphi) and accommodated twenty-two participants.

[18] There are several accounts of the influence of the far-right Golden Dawn and the concomitant strength of populist politics in Greece, and across Europe more generally (see Human Rights Watch 2012; 2013; Marchetos 2013). The effects of this understanding of Greece in relation to Europe are explored by Zaroulia and Hager (2014).